

Community gardens are a unique component of the urban environment that can present many benefits to the surrounding community. In 2015, Grow Local, an organization in Lafayette, Indiana, took the initiative of creating a network of gardeners devoted to supporting and encouraging urban gardening through action, education, and organization with the mission of enhancing community and quality of life.

Researchers from Purdue University collaborated with Grow Local to perform a baseline analysis of the current community gardening projects in Lafayette. Furthermore, the goal of this study was to explore the possibilities for expansion, improvement, and future community involvement to support and encourage community gardening in the Lafayette area. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were utilized throughout the research process. Seasonal inventories and soil analyses were collected at each Grow Local affiliated garden site. Additionally, gardener and stakeholder perceptions were collected through a number of interviews and focus groups.

The results from this process help to shed light on the main opinions and concerns of affiliated personnel, especially with regards to motivations for participating in community gardening as well as common barriers to involvement. One finding of interest from this study is that the produce provided from urban gardening may be second rate compared to community building in terms of the services presented by a healthy community gardening network. Urban gardening represents a unique means for integrating sustainable values through a social enterprise and it has a variety of inherent benefits and opportunities, as well.